

INDIAN ALCHEMY: A RASAYANA VIEW

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ABSTRACT

Rasashastra is a branch of *Ayurveda* which is popularly known as Indian alchemy. It mainly deals with the preparation of herbal, herbo-mineral, metallo-mineral drugs. The term *Rasashastra* comes from the word “*Rasa*” which is closely related to mercurial preparations. The ancient scholars of *Rasashastra* believed that due to only the insight of *Parad*, many diseases get eliminated. *Rasopanishatkar* stated that one should practice *Rasashastra* for health, wealth, longevity and even if for salvation. The formulations made in this branch are more potent due to their quick action, less dose and prolonged shelf life. *Rasayana* is defined as the way to build up all the tissues and make them work most efficiently. The term *Rasayana* actually means as the action of any drug that enhances the longevity of life, memory, cognitive functions of brain, rejuvenates the body, its aura, strength, voice, sensory functions, etc. Overall, the drugs those replenish and revitalize all the energy production and consumption systems of cells in different ways are said to be having *Rasayana* property. The present article will discuss some Alchemical preparations in *Rasayana* point of view mentioned in *Rasashastra*

Keywords: *Rasashastra*, *Rasayana*, Indian Alchemy, *Brahma Rasayana*, *Makardhwaj*, *Swarna Malini vasant*, *Gandhak Rasayana*

INTRODUCTION

In today's era, human life has been affected by drastic changes in atmosphere, diet and lifestyle and thus, the biggest challenge for humanity is to survive in this changed environment and compete with the pace of life. Further, newly emerging infections and metabolic disorders have imposed challenges to health-care systems.

In spite of advancement in medical science with invention of sophisticated investigative tools and deep

knowledge of human physiology and its structure, there had been no significant control over diseases, rather new health issues are emerging and in many cases with no remedial solution. These disorders are metabolic, genetic or infectious in origin.

Every system of medicine emphasizes on treating the disease but in *Ayurveda*, treating a disease is always secondary rather, maintaining and preserving health which is the first objective of health-care plans. May be

for this reason, utmost importance has been given for maintenance and sustenance of health in *Ayurveda* considering physical, mental, and sexual aspects.

Definition of Rasayana¹

Dirghamayuhu Smritim Medhamarogyam Tarunam Vayaha ||

PrabhavarnaswaroudaryamDehendriyabalam Param| Vaksiddhim Pranati Kantim Labhate Na Rasayanat | Labhopayo Hi Shastanam Rasadinam Rasayanam ||
Ch. Chi 1/7-8

On studying retrospectively, basic functions like building up energy resources in the tissues and activating the energy consumption channels can be attributed to the multidimensional effects of *Rasayana* drugs. Some drugs specifically work on certain tissues.

Medhya Rasayana like *Brahmi*, *Mandukparni*, *Shankhapushpi*, *Yashtimadhu* etc strengthen the sensory and cognitive functioning of brain. Some herbs like *Pippali*, *Bhallatak* etc. act for restoration of the health of respiratory system. Some medicines like *Triphala*, *Rasanjan*, etc. specially are useful in improving the vision.

Some of these are discussed below

1) *Brahma Rasayana*

there are many *Ayurvedic* herbal products explained for natural rejuvenation. Among them, *Brahma Rasayana* stands as the choicest natural remedy for stress and tiredness chronic. It is an herbal preparation (similar to *Chyawanprash*).

Medhasmritibalopetashchirratram Tapodhanaha | Brahmam Tapo Brahmacharyam cherushchtyantanishthya||

Rayanamidam Brahmamayushkamaha prayojayet | Dirghamayurvaryashchagrahyam kamashcheshtan Samashnute ||²

Ch. Chi 1/56-57

This herbal recipe has been prescribed by Lord Brahma. It rejuvenates the body and fights against tiredness, fatigue, early grey hair, wrinkling (Skin rejuvenation and hair rejuvenation)³. It is the best anti-aging formula. It also improves intelligence, memory and immune power. It helps to fight tiredness, fatigue, stress and aging. It is Advised with warm milk or warm

water, Experimental and clinical study reports on *Brahma Rasayana*:

1. Studies in mice have demonstrated *Brahma Rasayana* enhances the proliferation of spleen and marrow cells, humoral immunity and tumour cell killing activities.⁴
2. Administration of BR (*Brahma Rasayana*) accelerated the recovery of the haemopoetic system as seen by a rapid rise in total leukocytes. Both lymphocytes and neutrophils were significantly increased by *Rasayana* treatment.⁵
3. *Brahma Rasayana* inhibited methylcholanthrene induced sarcoma development.⁶

2) *Gandhak Rasayana*⁷

ShuddhoBalorgopayasa trivaram tatashchaturjataguduchikadbhihi |

Pathyakshadhatrithalabhiringanirairbhavyoashtavararama Prithagadrakena ||

Siddhe sitam yojaya tulyabhadgam Rasayanam gandhaksagyakam Syat |
Ayurveda Prakash

Gandhak Rasayan is a potent *Ayurvedic* medicine which has a mineral base namely that of purified or detoxified *sulphur*. This is processed with herbal juice as the dominant ingredient. *Gandhak Rasayan* is quite a versatile medicine and has powerful antibacterial, antiviral and antimicrobial activity. It therefore has a broad-spectrum effect and can treat a plethora of ailments.

*Swarnamalini Vasant*⁸

Swarna Malini Vasant Ras is an immunity enhancer and antibiotic medicine used for treatment of chronic fevers, general fatigue, weakness after fever or any wayward disease such as tuberculosis or heart diseases. *Swarna Malini Vasant* has its great curative action in splenomegaly (spleen enlargement), liver enlargement, hepatitis A, B, C and other types as well, malaria fever, productive cough, nervine weakness, cervicitis and other uterus infections and chronic headache.

4 Makardhwaj Ras⁹

Swarnam Tolaksammitam mridudalam yuktya vishud-dhikritam |

Swarnadashtagunonmitam Rasavaram jeernachcha-saugandhikam ||

Sanskaraibahubhirvishodhitamtho Sammelya sampeshayet |

Gandham Shodaashtolakam Suvimalam kuryattataha Kajjalim ||

R.T. 6/238

Vajikarana is a specialised treatment modality of *Ayurveda* and proposed benefits are manifold including increased sexual capacity, improving health of future progeny as well as in treatment of many common sexual disorders like infertility, erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation. *Vajikarana* drugs also act as *Rasayan* and have the capability to revitalize all the body elements and restores equilibrium and health. It is a special category of *Rasayan*, which improves the reproductive system and enhance sexual function. One such *Vajikaran* drug is *Makardhwaj Rasa*. Considering their medicinal properties and pharmacological actions it is evident that they contribute to aphrodisiac activity.

Here, mineral and herbal drugs act on synergism which makes the formulation potent enough to treat the infertility. For instance, *Vrishya* property of *Swarna* is well incorporated through *Yogwahi* property of *Gandhak Jarit Parad*, *Bhavana Samskar* with *Dravya* like *Kumari* and *Ratka Karpas Pushpa Swarasa* leads to possible formation of organ metallic compounds and converts heterogeneous form into homogenous form, macro to micro form, rough to smooth form of drugs.

This process of impregnation helps in reducing the particle size of the drugs thus increasing their capacity for absorption into the system. These herbal drugs in the form of juice impart their own therapeutic effects to these metals during processing like *Garbhashaya Balyakara* and *Soumanasyajanan*. *Nagvalli swarasa*, *Dugdha* and *Madhu* as *Anupan* play a major role in potentiating drug action through their *Rasa*, *Guna*, *Virya*, *Vipaka* and *Prabhav* as well as improvement of *Roga bala* and *Rogi bala*.

It is found that as the compound of these ingredients when administered along with betel leaf, milk and

honey, it has *Vrishya* effect, with *Trishoghna* property and immunomodulatory action. Thus, it is an excellent recipe for positive health, longevity and an effective sex tonic to cure infertility.

DISCUSSION

Looking at the multifaceted approach of *Rasayana*, it can be said that a deep analysis of health parameters, its assessment, and its maintenance was the first approach of *Ayurveda*, and thus, treatment in *Ayurveda* is defined as all such activities in the form of diet, lifestyle, or medicines which target at *Dhatu Samya* (achieving the state of homeostasis) and not merely treating the disease.

To meet this challenge, awareness among mass regarding preventive use of *Rasayana* as prophylactic can be introduced. Some *Rasayana* are also disease specific and are used in specific disease states as they induce specific immunity and bio-strength to combat a particular disease. Such *Rasayana* is called as *Naimittika Rasayana*. The tissue-specific *Rasayana* drugs can be administered along with the treatment of the underlying disease to enhance the tissue strength and disease-combating power so that faster and better relief may be provided, and recurrences may be prevented. Like person in prediabetes state can be given simple herbs like *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia*), *Amalaki* (*Emblica officinalis*.) and thus can prevent diabetes. There can be many other *Naimittika Rasayana* which may be identified by an appropriate trial and few researches in the past have proved their immunomodulating actions. Clinical trials have shown that the use of appropriate *Rasayana* drugs such as *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*), *Guduchi* and *Pippali* (*Piper longum*) to the treatment of allergic disorders such as eczema, urticaria, allergic rhinitis, and bronchial asthma helps for better and faster relief and prevents recurrences. Similarly, to combat autoimmune disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis or cancer or pulmonary tuberculosis, advocating *Rasayana* drug as adjuvant to on-going medicines can also provide encouraging result and improve quality of life of patients.

Furthermore, in stress-induced conditions such as anxiety and insomnia or neurodegenerative conditions

such as Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, and senile dementia, administration of *Medhya Rasayana* provides marked improvement in the quality of life of patients.

The anti-ageing potency of many *Ayurvedic* drugs and mechanism behind this effect is being proven in labs with the development of the science of psycho-neuro-endocrino-immunology. Brain can influence the immune system which in turn can send impulses to the brain by means of secreting hormones and neuropeptides. Many drugs like *Tinospora cordifolia*, *Asperagus racemosus*, *Withania somnifera*, *Terminalia chebula*, *Piper longum*,

Emblica officinalis, etc. have been studied and proved to be effective on this subtle system of action and reaction. They ultimately have multi-dimensional effects on whole body and work as *Rasayana* drugs.

CONCLUSION

Being a part of health-care delivery system, the time has come to reanalyse the system of health management and look back at the philosophy of prevention and preservation as the first step to the treatment. More study and scientific observations are needed to scientifically prove the mechanism behind the effects of *Rasayana* drugs stated in *Ayurvedic* classical texts. Nearly all diseases are supposed to be treated by specific *Rasayana* at the end of treatment so that relapse of the diseases can be prevented.

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Source of Support: Nil

Conflict of Interest: None Declared

How to cite this URL: Dhanashree Ghotkar et al: Indian Alchemy: A Rasayana View. International Ayurvedic Medical Journal {online} 2020 {cited May, 2020} Available from: http://www.iamj.in/posts/images/upload/3578_3581.pdf